

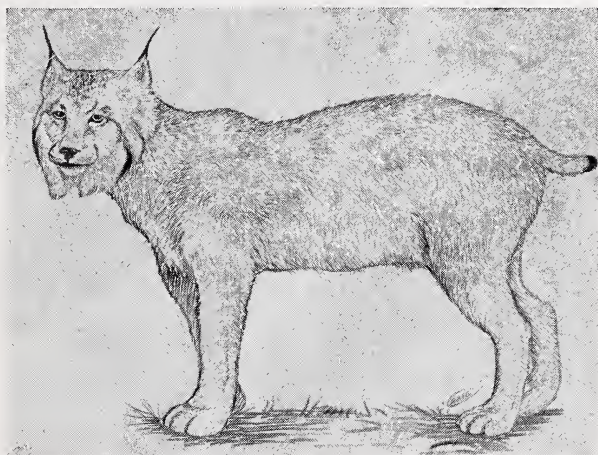
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# THE LYNX - A FURBEARER

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One of Montana's rarest forest dwellers, the Canada lynx, received a raise in status from the 1959 legislature. Effective July 1, 1959, the Canada lynx will be a fur-bearer instead of a predator.

The Canada lynx, because of its scarcity and preference for remote areas, is not important as a predator on livestock and game. Many small mammals and birds are eaten but the most common item in the diet is the snowshoe hare. The lynx depends upon the snowshoe to the extent that lynx numbers vary directly with the abundance of this prey species.

Canada lynx furs are valuable. At the February sale of one of the large Seattle fur houses, lynx pelts averaged \$15.85 and the best lot brought \$26.00 per pelt. Open seasons on lynx usually will coincide with open seasons for marten since the two species inhabit much the same country.

Scarcity of the lynx is reflected in total catch figures calculated from the reports of licensed trappers for the past seven years. The average annual catch during this period was 19 lynx. In contrast, bobcat catch figures for the same period averaged 1,000 per year. The true number of lynx taken by licensed trappers may be even lower than this calculated

average catch. Some of these reports of Canada lynx come from outside the known range for the species and may well represent mistaken identification of bobcats.

Classification of the Canada lynx as a fur-bearer means that anyone who traps or shoots a lynx must have a trapping license. This brings legal problems to those who hunt or trap predators without a hunting license unless they can readily distinguish between the bobcat and the lynx. Canada lynxes accidentally killed in trapping for predators should be turned in to the nearest warden without delay. Because of the scarcity of the Canada lynx, few people will actually face this problem.

For the benefit of those who may need to distinguish between the bobcat and the Canada lynx, the pictures and table included with this article describe the typical differences between the two cats. A given specimen may not be typical for a certain characteristic but there are enough distinctive differences to identify any individual up to considerable distances. The Canada lynx has been described as a bobcat on stilts wearing snowshoes. The lynx gives the impression of being larger than the bobcat but this is chiefly because of longer hair, longer legs and larger



The upper photo illustrates the top of a bobcat and lynx tail. The lower photo shows the underside of the same tails. Note the definite barred appearance of the bobcat tail in the upper photo and the conspicuous lack of the black tip on the underside of the bobcat's tail.

—Photos by Hector LaCasse



feet. There is not much difference in average body weights. Most adult bobcats and Canada lynxes will weigh between 20 and 35 pounds.

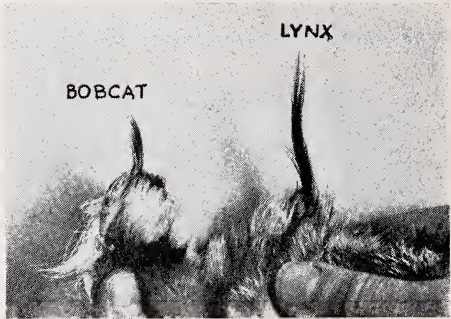
Part of the confusion over the distinctions between a bobcat and a Canada lynx comes from the common names applied to the bobcat. The bobcat is also called bay lynx, wild cat and lynx-cat. The so-called lynx-cat is a fur trade name for large, well-furred, gray bobcats. Bobcats with shorter fur and reddish color are often called "wild cats" by the fur trade.

The Canada lynx inhabits the denser forests at medium to high elevations. It is common only in local areas in the northwestern part of the state. The bobcat is found throughout the state in varying abundance. In the mountains the bobcat prefers the more open forests at lower elevations. The bobcat often replaces the lynx in logged-over areas. Apparently the bobcat adjusts more readily to man's activities and is not as specialized in food habits.

Though their pelts are valuable, the Canada lynx will never be important as a commercial fur-bearer in Montana. The important thing is to perpetuate this rare wildlife species for future generations to know and enjoy. Man's activities have eliminated the fisher and the kit fox from Montana and have reduced the black-footed ferret and grizzly bear to the status of endangered species.

In the Canada lynx we have an opportunity to prevent such a loss before it is too late.

At present, trapping is not a threat to preservation of the Canada lynx. The Montana Fish and Game Commission now, however, has the authority to regulate or even close the seasons should this be necessary to protect the lynx. Extensive logging of lynx habitat is far more detrimental than regulated trapping. Increasing demands for wood products may mean that only in the wilderness areas of our national forests and national parks will animals such as the



Ear tufts of the lynx (right) are much longer than those of the bobcat (left).

—Photo by Hector LaCasse

Canada lynx, wolverine, marten and grizzly bear find their required habitats.

| Characteristics |  | Bobcat                                                                                                                            | Canada Lynx                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ears            |  | With short to medium-length tufts (up to 1 inch), backs of ears black, usually with gray spot.                                    | With long tufts (to 2 inches or more), backs of ears gray, edged in black.                                                                |
| Face            |  | Small ruff about the face.                                                                                                        | Pronounced ruff about the face.                                                                                                           |
| Legs            |  | With black spots and bars.                                                                                                        | Long, heavy, without spots or bars.                                                                                                       |
| Feet            |  | Small, black underneath, pads bare.                                                                                               | Large, broad, pads heavily furred, light-colored.                                                                                         |
| Tail            |  | Tip black on top only, preceded by one or two black bars.                                                                         | Tip black all around, not preceded by black bars.                                                                                         |
| Color           |  | Grayish to reddish brown above. Grayest in winter, redder in summer. Underparts light buff to white with distinct spots and bars. | Pale, grizzled gray. Palest in winter, browner in summer. Underparts mottled with white, gray and black hairs, no distinct spots or bars. |